Date and Time: Tuesday, May 16, 2023 11:44:00AM PDT

Job Number: 197215115

Document (1)

1. *Clubs of doom &; the limits to models; Global politicians claim to set climate policy based on 'the science,' but the science is driven by 'the politics'*

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "doom" and ("climate" or "eco")

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type	Narrowed by
News	Sources: National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post)(Canada); Timeline: Jan 01, 2018 to May 15, 2023; All Content Types: News; Geography by Document: North America; Geography by Document: Canada

Clubs of doom &; the limits to models; Global politicians claim to set climate policy based on 'the science,' but the science is driven by 'the politics'

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

June 25, 2021 Friday

Ottawa Edition

Section: FP COMMENT; Pg. FP10

Length: 2008 words

Byline: Terence Corcoran, Financial Post

Body

In November the world's nations will meet in Glasgow for the 26th UN ***Climate*** Change Conference of the Parties (COP26). It is set to become the most important political event of the year and maybe the decade or - who knows, the century - as more than 100 nations attempt to create a globalist agreement to reshape the planet's economy to meet the dictates of ***climate*** change science. Alok Sharma, the British president of COP26, summarized the summit's objectives: "To keep the temperature of the planet under control - limiting its increase to 1.5 degrees - the science dictates that by the second half of the century, we should be producing less carbon than we take out of the atmosphere. This is what reaching 'net zero' means."

That phrase, "the science dictates," is instructive. For decades the world has been presented with massive volumes of scientific information, research and studies based on computer models of the planet that are said to show the world heading toward a ***climate*** catastrophe. Dramatic actions on a local, national and global scale to curb and ultimately eliminate carbon emissions are essential to prevent the devastation that threatens human existence if nothing is done.

That is what the science dictates.

But who's dictating the science? It would be comforting to believe with confidence that the science behind the global ***climate*** alarm is solid and objective, driven by immutable and indisputable hard evidence and incontrovertible conclusions reached by a community of straight-thinking scientists.

Unfortunately the science foundations for the COP26 summit - and for all the current policy activity surrounding ***climate*** change, the environment and the economy - is not just science. The justification for the dire warnings and calls for a remake of the global energy system are dependent on massively complex computer models of the world's multitudinous economic and environmental systems.

These computer simulations and scenarios, known today as Integrated Assessment Models, are the latest versions of half-a-century of attempts to merge all human activity and natural phenomena into massive unified models that can be used to outline outcomes decades and even a century into the future. Before these scientific modelling efforts are accepted, however, we should understand that behind the science lies more than half a century of politics.

From one perspective, the politics behind the global models began to take hold 50 years ago when a wealthy Italian corporate tycoon, Aurelio Peccei, along with British OECD bureaucrat Alexander King, landed in Ottawa in April 1971, to attend the second full meeting of the Club of Rome at the Seigniory Club in Montebello, Que. There, under the sponsorship of prime minister Pierre Trudeau and the government of Canada, Club of Rome members heard

the outline of a global "Systems Dynamics" model that would become the basis for The Limits to Growth, one of the most influential books in the history of environmental and political activism.

At the Montebello meeting, a 28-year-old MIT researcher named Dennis Meadows presented his global model plan to club members and others, including J. Rennie Whitehead, a leading Ottawa insider whose personal memoir of the event portray prime minister Trudeau as something of a comradein-arms with the Club of Rome's founding leaders.

The club's objective was to raise global political awareness of what Peccei and associates believed was a growing global poverty and environment crisis. Whitehead quotes an unnamed official: "There are two possible approaches: One is to try to build up an ethic which substitutes satisfaction for material reward. The other is to frighten people to the point where they will make sacrifices in order to avoid catastrophe. Both methods must be attempted."

The computer model proposed by Meadows, known as World3, incorporated the work of MIT global modelling pioneer Jay Forrester. It turned out to be perfectly suited to what was essentially the prime objective: frighten the hell out of people and policy-makers based on the predetermined assumptions that catastrophe loomed unless the "Predicament of Mankind" was solved.

At the Montebello meeting near Ottawa, Meadows, his academic wife Donella, and Forrester described their model project. Donella Meadows recalled the meeting in the "opulent wood-panelled conference room" at the "grand estate called Montebello." The club, she said, had asked the MIT team "for a preliminary presentation of our work. It was at that meeting that The Limits to Growth was conceived - or a better word might be provoked."

Limits to Growth, based on early computer-driven modelling exercises, assumed exponential growth in population and economic development that would choke a "finite planet." Something had to be done, and the use of alarming models would serve as policy stimulators.

Club of Rome co-founder Alexander King once summarized the plan. "In searching for a new enemy to unite us, we came up with the idea that pollution, the threat of global warming, water shortages, famine and the like would fit the bill. ... All these dangers are caused by human intervention, and it is only through changed attitudes and behaviour that they can be overcome. The real enemy then, is humanity itself."

Five aspects of human activity were modelled - population, food production, industrialization, pollution and non-renewable resource consumption - on the assumption that they were all expanding exponentially. If policy-makers continued with their current approaches, a crisis loomed within the next 100 years. "The most probable result will be a sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity."

That was the warning 50 years ago. The book and Club of Rome ideology, propelled by the science magic of world computer modelling, became a major factor in the reign of the Trudeau government, as magnificently documented by Canadian researcher Jason Churchill in a 2006 history thesis, "The Limits to Influence: The Club of Rome and Canada." Whole federal departments, including the ministries of science and the environment, were created as a claque of Trudeau cabinet ministers embraced the model-driven ideology of staving off catastrophe.

The Limits to Growth theory was also heartily endorsed by such globalists as Klaus Schwab and his World Economic Forum. In 1973 in Davos, Schwab had Aurelio Peccei deliver a Limits to Growth speech at the annual WEF meeting, which Schwab says gave the Club of Rome a "platform" that helped turn the book into a global bestseller.

The rest of the story, however, is not quite perfect. The computer modelling behind Limits to Growth was also widely attacked as unrealistic doomsterism. One book, Models of ***Doom***: A Critique of The Limits to Growth, denounced the project for its Malthusian methods, following the 18th-century British scientist Thomas Malthus. Malthus is credited with creating the exponential growth theory prediction that food production would not be able to keep up with population growth - a theory that has been proven false.

Other critics included 2018 Nobel Prize winner William D. Nordhaus, who wrote in 1973 that The Limits to Growth model involved "measurement without data." In comments posted on the Nobel site, Nordhaus called the book "flaky" and said he was "appalled" by the lapses in the methodology.

Despite enormous criticisms, the Limits to Growth model launched a 50-year whirlwind that led to the Integrated Assessment Model (IAM) explosion that continues to dominate long-term ***climate*** and economic planning. One modeller said Limits to Growth "wasn't called an IAM but in effect it pioneered this notion of computational science to look at the deep future of the planet by simulating different dimensions of human development and environmental impact." While unfathomably complex, computerized modelling is at the heart of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on ***Climate*** Change (IPCC) predictions of ***doom*** and gloom that now motivate political activists and governments - although Nordhaus won his Nobel for his own computer models that demonstrated how the COP26 and IPCC plans to hit 1.5 Centigrade would make the world poorer compared with doing nothing.

Today, research and commentary on computerized IAMs and other futuristic modelling exercises have continued to expand, generating hundreds of papers and books, including much criticism of misuse and abuse of data, scenario manipulation and other inadequacies. The IPCC's modelling of carbon emissions and temperature change was described in one recent study as being based on "implausible assumptions" and based on out-of-date information. In a recent Financial Times commentary, the University of Colorado's Roger Pielke said the European Central Bank's ***climate*** modelling is based on "obsolete" scenarios. In another commentary, Pielke called for opening up the ***climate*** policy debate to take it "beyond the constraints imposed by scenarios and models" that drive policy into uncertain economic and technical territory. Pielke cited the current corporate and policy hype around carbon sequestration and storage as an example of a modelling exercise. The carbon capture idea "was created, not in the real world, but in models that sustain the current policy envelope."

In other words, carbon capture ideas track the old Club of Rome method, which is to use science to promote and justify actions. A group of Swedish researchers reached the same conclusion about carbon capture in a paper last month. Carbon sequestration ideas from the official UN policy-making agencies, they said, "relied heavily on ***climate*** mitigation scenarios" and point to a "danger in placing much emphasis on models that seem to close rather than broaden horizons of expectations." In November, a comprehensive review of the history of global modelling came from another group of European academics. Titled "Anticipating futures through models," it tracks the messy evolution of models back to 1970 and concludes with a call for caution. Since major policy decisions are being made on the basis of models there is a need to "continuously and actively re-evaluate the role of IAMs and reflect on their use in combination with alternative approaches to explore possible futures."

More extreme critics, including U.S. physicist Steven Koonin in his new book Unsettled: What ***Climate*** Science Tells Us, What It Doesn't, and Why It Matters, takes constant aim at the model-based science of ***climate*** change. "That the models can't reproduce the past is a big red flag - it erodes confidence in their projections of future climates."

Planetary modelling has clearly come a long way since Pierre Trudeau hosted the 1971 meeting of the Club of Rome in Montebello, Que. Jason Churchill, in his recount of Trudeau's fascination with the Limits to Growth theory, also reports that "in the final years of his time in power, the commitment to systems-based holistic policy development waned." In other words, political and economic reality had kicked in.

Now 50 years later, the big modelling concepts are back in vogue - big time, and not just in government. In an announcement last week, BlackRock Inc., the activist nine-trillion-dollar power fund controlled by corporate governance guru Larry Fink, announced a partnership with Baringa, a ***climate*** modelling company based in London. The plan, they said, is to integrate Baringa's "***Climate*** Change Scenario Model" to "enhance BlackRock's Aladdin ***Climate*** to help companies assess ***climate*** impacts."

Baringa describes its business operation and its "unique" scenario model as "the only fully integrated transition and physical risk model of its kind that is fully configurable, allowing you to do multiple bespoke scenarios;

'zoomable'allowing you to see ***climate*** impacts at portfolio down to individual asset level; and comprehensive in its coverage, across all the asset classes you need."

Models have come a long way since The Limits to Growth. Or have they? Really?

Graphic

London Free Press File Photo/; Lucas Jackson, Reuters File Photo; From Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau in 1971 to BlackRock's Larry Fink in 2021, the political manipulation of global models continues.;

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: News

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: ELECTIONS & POLITICS (91%); ***CLIMATE*** CHANGE (90%); ***CLIMATE*** CHANGE REGULATION & POLICY (90%); CLIMATOLOGY (90%); CONFERENCES & CONVENTIONS (90%); PLANETS & ASTEROIDS (90%); POLITICS (90%); TALKS & MEETINGS (90%); ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION & POLICY (89%); INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS (89%); HEADS OF STATE & GOVERNMENT (79%); AGREEMENTS (78%); BUSINESS NEWS (78%); ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (78%); ECONOMY & ECONOMIC INDICATORS (78%); EMISSIONS (78%); MODELING & SIMULATION (78%); NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS (78%); TRENDS & EVENTS (78%); UNITED NATIONS (78%); ENTERPRISE GLOBALIZATION (77%); SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (76%); GREENHOUSE GASES (73%); PRIME MINISTERS (72%); november,nations,glasgow,***climate***,change,conference (%)

Industry: EMISSIONS (78%); MODELING & SIMULATION (78%); COMPUTER SIMULATION (76%)

Geographic: OTTAWA, ON, CANADA (73%); GLASGOW, SCOTLAND (58%); CANADA (94%); UNITED KINGDOM (79%)

Load-Date: June 25, 2021

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